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ECONOMIC DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE

Intelligence Request No. 23
Control No. 2222
20 March 1956

SUBJECT

Borax Discovery in Tibet.

REQUESTING AGENCY AND DATE

BFC, 13 March 1956

DEADLINE

As soon as possible.

PROPOSED USE

To evaluate the strategic importance of borax to the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

REFERENCES

At the request of JOC, EDIC undertook a study of the use of borax products by the Soviet Bloc (EDIC Case 8, 3 June 1955). EDIC/ID-15 (Revised), dated 14 September 1955, summarized intelligence relating to the production and use of boron substances as fuels. The existence of borax deposits in Tibet was mentioned briefly. A redraft of this report was approved for release to COCOM. (See EDIC/ID-15, Second Revision, dated 9 December 1955).

BACKGROUND

According to a recent issue of the Far Eastern Economic Review (19 January 1956, page 79), a lake has been discovered in northern Tibet containing an estimated 10,000,000 tons of crude borax. The quantities of industrial borax are given as about 8,000,000 tons. This equals 10 years of US production at present rates.

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The article is reproduced in full as follows:

CPYRGHT

"Natural Resources. A lake abounding in natural borax was discovered in the northern part of Tibet last December. According to an initial estimate, the 100-square kilometre lake contains 10 million tons of crude borax. 80 kilogrammes of industrial borax can be extracted from 100 kilogrammes of the crude borax of this lake. Geological prospecting target prescribed under the first five-year plan is expected to be fulfilled ahead of schedule. The total volume of work in the revised prospecting target for 1956 is 30 per cent higher than the original plan. Under the new plan the targets set for the first five-year plan will be fulfilled by the end of this year." (Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 January 1956, published in Hong Kong.)

Actual and prospective exploitation are not discussed in this short article. No specific geographic location is given. The location may be remote from production and transportation facilities.

ACTION DESIRED

1. The BFC member of EDIC has requested that an effort be made to determine whether any other intelligence on this subject is available.

2. This request is circulated to EDIC members for information prior to consideration at the next EDIC meeting.

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Acting Executive Secretary

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